

## YOUTH AFFAIRS

The Office of Youth Affairs (OYA) was set up by the Commonwealth Government in February 1977 in response to the findings of the Study Group on Youth Affairs. The Office, which is in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of all Commonwealth policies, programs and proposals affecting young people.

### Programs

#### *Program of Assistance to Youth Organisations (PAYO)*

Under this program, grants are provided for projects to assist national youth organisations to extend their services, broaden their participation of young people in management and organisational decision making and to improve planning co-ordination and the quality and relevance of their activities.

In addition to project related assistance, grants are provided to help establish effective national secretariats for national youth organisations.

#### *International Youth Exchanges*

The International Program of the Office of Youth Affairs is intended to promote Australian involvement in international youth affairs in the Asia-Pacific region through:

- (i) Government to government exchanges which are development oriented with a view to strengthening local programs and increasing expertise in the youth field.
- (ii) Grants to non-government organisations for international activities and to the Youth Affairs Council of Australia for an international function.
- (iii) Co-ordination of Commonwealth Youth Program (CYP) matters and liaison with other international agencies eg. UN, ESCAP, UNESCO. Activities include attendance at meetings, contributions to studies and information networks, provision of experts and hosting of fellows or trainees. Australian involvement in regional activities is expected to increase substantially due to the establishment of the CYP's new South Pacific Regional Centre, Fiji.
- (iv) Responses to invitations from other governments eg. the Japanese Goodwill Cruise.

#### *Community Employment Program*

As a positive step to create temporary jobs in these times of high youth unemployment, OYA has used the resources available through the Community Employment Program (CEP). This project received a Commonwealth grant of \$1.42 million and employed approximately 72 participants for between 35 weeks to one year in centres around Australia. The project encouraged and assisted specific groups of disadvantaged young people to participate in International Youth Year (IYY) activities.

Each State and Territory employed a Project Co-ordinator and assistant(s) in each capital city. Thirty-four project officers were allocated for specific projects aimed at target groups of disadvantaged young people. These were identified as women, Aborigines, ethnic, mentally and physically disabled, and remote and isolated areas. The project officers assisted these groups in establishing and maintaining links with IYY and the youth sector.

As a part of the CEP Project, the OYA developed a pilot in-service training program for all staff employed in the Project as well as other youth affairs workers in the field. The pilot scheme was closely monitored with a view to its development as an in-service training package with wide applicability to the youth affairs field in Australia.

#### *Youth service development*

OYA has initiated a three year youth service development strategy to improve the quality, co-ordination and relevance of youth services. The first stage of this strategy includes programs to:

- document and widely disseminate information on existing mechanisms which are operating successfully
- pilot projects to test the success of a variety of mechanisms to improve co-ordination and access to local youth services
- further develop in-service training for youth workers
- develop effective methods of identifying youth needs

OYA has also set up a national pilot program to fund a variety of community organisations or government authorities to enable interested young people to undertake voluntary community service work.

**International Youth Year (IYY) 1985**

During IYY, the Office of Youth Affairs provided a secretariat to service the National IYY Coordination Committee. This Committee comprised Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, unions, employers, local government and representatives from the voluntary community sector.

A special article on IYY was included in Year Book No. 69 (pages 244–246).

The year got off to a busy start, with radio stations in each State and Territory setting up telephone “Hotlines”, for young people to speak their minds about issues of concern to them. Young people decided it was time to set things right—from the widespread shortage of evening entertainment spots aside from hotels, to schemes to help the elderly and less fortunate through community service by young people.

Job creation on a local level was one of the major trends in IYY. Young people combined forces with community groups, local, State and Federal Government agencies, to establish self-help, short-term and some permanent work opportunities.

Young people in schools pushed for establishment of student representative councils, seeking the right to have a say in their education. Likewise, many local government authorities helped set up “junior councils”, to advise them on youth matters.

Peace was a major concern of nearly all Australia's young people. Surveys showed up to 90 per cent of them believed there would be a nuclear holocaust in their lifetimes. Young people organised peace marches and committees in schools, as well as a number of national conferences on peace and disarmament.

Backing up these major youth initiatives, there were many programs established for IYY by non-government organisations, which received funding from the Commonwealth. Under the Program of Assistance to Youth Organisations, funds were provided to groups such as the Australian Council of Rural Youth; the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils; the national Christian youth organisation Fusion; Girl Guides; YMCA and YWCA; and the Working With Young Women's Group. Non-government involvement with IYY extended beyond voluntary community groups. Many corporations took deliberate steps to improve conditions for young people.

While encouraging a wide array of activities within its own borders, the Australian Government also supported many international youth projects, organised as part of IYY. Australian representatives played an important part in the Commonwealth Conference of Young People, which brought together 80 representatives of 52 countries in Ottawa, Canada, early in June 1985. Two Australian youth workers also completed six month training courses at the Commonwealth Youth Program Asia Centre in Chandigarh, India, during the first half of the year.

Involvement in the Asia Pacific Region's Youth Exchange Program, set up in 1981, was stepped up in 1985. Youth worker exchanges were organised with Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Under the same program, 10 Australians attended the IYY Friendly Gathering organised by the All China Youth Federation in May.

A group of young Australians joined the Japan Youth Goodwill Cruise, visiting Japan, Korea and Singapore early in the year. Eight young Australians received Australian Greek Presidential Awards to study in Greece for up to 12 months. And assistance was provided to the YMCA, to send delegates to the Asia Pacific YMCA Youth Leaders Conference, as well as to support an exchange between the Australian Council of Rural Youth and China.

Detailed information about young people and the factors affecting their lives was scarce before 1985, but the year included major efforts to redress this situation. The Australian Bureau of Statistics produced its first major *Youth Profile*, providing figures on many aspects of young people's lives—from education and jobs, to housing and health. Other information, in areas such as health, social security, legal aid, education and employment, was gathered by both Government and non-government agencies. One of the major trends growing out of IYY was to set up information outlets, easily accessible to young people.

The Year was one of major advances for youth in Australia. But, as with all other successful International Years, the real results will begin to show up several years later, when those who have been inspired by the year's events see some of their ideas and ideals brought to fruition.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ABS Publications

University and Advanced Education Student Statistics, Australia, 1982 to 1984, Summary (4222.0)

Colleges of Advanced Education, Australia (4206.0)

University Statistics, Australia (4208.0)

National Schools Statistics Collection: Government Schools, Australia (4215.0)

Non-government Schools, Australia (4216.0)

National Schools Statistics Collection, Australia (4221.0)

Financial aspects are dealt with in the annual publications—

Commonwealth Government Finance, Australia (5502.0)

State and Local Government Finance, Australia (5504.0)

Expenditure on Education, Australia (5510.0)

Government Financial Estimates, Australia (5501.0)

### Other Publications

Annual publications produced by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission are:

Selected University Statistics

Selected Advanced Education Statistics

Selected TAFE Statistics

Publications produced regularly by the Department of Education are:

Australian Education Directory

Directory of Higher Education Courses

Directory of Education Research and Researchers in Australia

Education in Australia

Education News (a departmental journal)

Hemisphere (a bi-monthly Asian-Australian magazine)

Major Trends and Developments in Australian Education

Primary and Secondary Schooling in Australia

The annual reports of the respective State education departments also provide detailed statistical information.

IN RETROSPECT.....Year Book No 2 (1901-1908)

**Practical Results of Kindergarten Teaching.**—The establishment of the free kindergartens has had a very wholesome effect on both children and parents in the localities where the schools have been placed. Habits of industry, alertness, and self-respect spread from children to parents. The teachers who work in the kindergarten acquire an insight into the psychology of the child mind, and the tolerance, kindness, and self-restraint which they must necessarily possess react for good on the surrounding community. Children from the kindergartens are said to possess greater mental keenness, and to be more responsive to ordinary primary teaching than those who have not attended these institutions.